

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1518

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to improving student achievement by promoting social emotional learning throughout the calendar year.

Brief Description: Improving student achievement by promoting social emotional learning throughout the calendar year.

Sponsors: Representatives Senn, Stambaugh, Lovick, Stonier, Harris, Slatter, Kilduff, Nealey, Caldier, Clibborn, Ortiz-Self, Haler, Kloba, Pollet, Orwall, Doglio, Kagi, Fitzgibbon, Goodman, Bergquist, Hudgins, Ormsby, Stanford and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/17, 2/16/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires that the Department of Early Learning contract for up to an additional 600 summer Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program slots at certain priority school buildings.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a work group to build upon the social emotional learning (SEL) benchmarks developed in 2016, and provides a list of members and duties for the work group.
- Establishes a competitive grant program to increase the number of summer learning programs that combine academics and SEL, and specifies application criteria and reporting requirements for the program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter and Springer.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Steele and Volz.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Social and Emotional Learning. In 2010 the Department of Early Learning (DEL), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and Thrive by Five Washington reviewed and revised the early learning and development benchmarks, which they published as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines. These guidelines include information about social and emotional learning (SEL) and development for parents, teachers, and other adults who support children in grades kindergarten through grade 3.

The 2015 Operating Budget (i.e., Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6052, enacted as Chapter 4, Laws of 2015, 3rd Special Session) directed the OSPI to convene a work group to recommend comprehensive benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL for grades kindergarten through high school that build upon what is being done in early learning. As required, the work group reported its recommendations on October 1, 2016. The work group recommended that the Legislature, with guidance and support from the OSPI:

- adopt the proposed SEL framework, including the guiding principals, standards, and benchmarks for kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students in Washington; and
- continue to fund the SEL Benchmarks Work Group as a state-level advisory committee.

Expanded Learning Opportunities. Activities offered to students before or after school, during school, during intersession breaks, or during summer are often referred to as expanded learning opportunities (ELOs). The Expanded Learning Opportunities Council (Council) was established by the Legislature in 2014 to advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the OSPI on a comprehensive ELOs system, with particular attention to solutions to summer learning loss. In 2014 the Council adopted the Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development, and recommended that ELO programs use these standards to identify program goals.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The state preschool program is called the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The stated goal of the ECEAP is to help ensure children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Children are eligible for ECEAP if they are from families with annual incomes at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, (\$26,730 for a family of four) qualify for school district special education services, or have developmental or environmental risk factors that could affect school success. Although the ECEAP prioritizes children who are 4 years old, children who are 3 years old are also eligible for the program.

Approved ECEAPs receive state-funded support through the DEL. Public or private nonsectarian organizations, including school districts, community and technical colleges, local governments, and nonprofit organizations may contract with the DEL to become ECEAP providers. Out of 365 ECEAP classrooms, 196 are in public schools.

Over 11,600 ECEAP slots are currently funded. Most slots are in school-year programs, with full day slots providing at least 1,000 hours per year and part day slots providing at least 320 hours per year. There are about 550 year-round slots, called extended slots. The February 2017 forecast indicates that nearly 19,000 children will be eligible for ECEAP by the 2020-21 school year, when the program becomes an entitlement.

Summer Food Service Program. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a Child Nutrition Program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The SFSP provides reimbursement for nutritious meals served to children in lower income areas at no cost when school is out. Meals must be served in low-income communities where at least 50 percent of children are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals or in other locations where at least 50 percent of the children enrolled in a specific program are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.

In Washington, the OSPI administers the program. Public or private nonprofit organizations (schools, tribal organizations, summer camps, higher education institutions, etc.) may apply to the OSPI to sponsor a SFSP. Sponsors receive federal reimbursement from the OSPI to cover the administrative and operating costs of preparing and serving meals to eligible children at one or more meal sites.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The act may be known and cited as the Summer Step-Up Act.

Summer Early Learning Programs. Subject to funding appropriated by the Legislature, by March 1, 2018, the DEL must contract for up to an additional 600 summer ECEAP slots at K-12 school building sites, distributed across the state. The DEL must give priority to summer ECEAP operated in school buildings that:

- plan to include 4-year-old and 5-year-old children;
- are in low-income areas or areas underserved by early childhood education programs;
- and
- plan to fund meal programs during the summer using reimbursements from the USDA or other nonstate sources.

By October 1, 2019, the DEL must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that includes recommendations for continuing, modifying, or expiring the program, and that describes:

- how many summer ECEAP slots were funded;
- participants' school readiness outcomes compared to children that did not receive the summer school programming;
- lessons learned in combining academics and SEL in summer ECEAP; and

- lessons learned in funding meal programs during the summer using reimbursements from the USDA or other nonstate sources.

Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks Work Group. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must convene a work group to build upon the 2016 SEL Benchmarks Work Group. The work group must include:

- the members of the original SEL Benchmarks Work Group;
- representatives of the state ethnic commissions, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, federally recognized tribes and urban tribal centers, an organization that specifically works to close the educational opportunity gap, grassroots organizations engaged with communities of color, a statewide ELO intermediary, and an organization that works with immigrant populations; and
- experts in SEL curriculum development, early childhood development, and adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed care.

First, the work group must identify and articulate developmental indicators for every grade level for each of the six benchmarks described in the 2016 SEL report. These indicators must be culturally inclusive and responsive, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with the 2016 SEL report. Feedback from stakeholders and experts across the state on the SEL benchmarks and indicators must be solicited and incorporated into the benchmarks and indicators.

Next, the work group must develop a model of best practices for educators, schools, districts, and families to monitor students' social emotional development and progress, and communicate this information to students' families. The model must not stigmatize or label individual students, not place one set of cultural norms or practices above another, be developmentally appropriate, and not be used as a state assessment or learning standard, nor affect students' grades.

The work group must also develop guidance for schools, school districts, and educators in promoting developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL throughout the calendar year that is:

- culturally competent;
- linguistically appropriate;
- provides a positive learning environment for students;
- is inclusive of parental involvement;
- promotes school safety and a positive school climate;
- includes best practices in assisting students through high school transitions between elementary, middle, and high school;
- incorporates best practices to address the mental health continuum of children, from mental well-being and mental health to mental illness, and acknowledges research around adverse childhood experiences; and
- includes best practices for incorporating SEL into expanded learning and youth development programs.

In addition, the work group must provide technical advice on how developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL fits within existing teacher and principle evaluations, particularly as it relates to school safety and

school climate. The work group must also create a state implementation plan that provides a framework for incorporating and aligning SEL with other Washington education initiatives, including college and career readiness, STEM education, twenty-first century skills, Washington state Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development, and the state learning standards. Finally, by September 1, 2019, the work group must submit a report to the Legislature, the Governor, and the SPI that details the work group's activities. The work group expires on July 1, 2020.

Duties of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. To inform the work of the SEL Work Group, the OSPI must survey schools to:

- ascertain how many schools in the state are teaching interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL; and
- understand individual districts' community-based partners' capacity to implement the SEL benchmarks and indicators.

The SPI must select and employ a SEL technical advisor to assist and advise schools in implementing SEL programs throughout the calendar year. The SPI must also adopt, periodically update, and post on its website, SEL developmental benchmarks and indicators, best practices, and guidance, based on the recommendations of the SEL Work Group.

Summer Step-Up Grant Program. The Summer Step-Up Grant Program is established to increase the number of summer learning programs that combine academics and SEL. The OSPI must develop and administer the competitive grant program.

By March 1, 2018, the OSPI must award two-year grants to summer learning programs that are at least four weeks in length, for any of grades K-12 that agree to create or expand summer learning programs that combine academics and SEL. Summer learning programs may be operated by public schools, school districts, expanded learning organizations, or community-based organizations.

The OSPI must establish criteria to evaluate applicants, and require applicants to describe: the number and grade levels of the students that grant money will serve; how the summer learning program will combine academics and SEL; and how summer meals will be funded, including whether meals will be reimbursed by the USDA or other nonstate sources. In awarding grant money, the OSPI must give priority to applicants that plan to fund meal programs during the summer using reimbursements from the USDA or other nonstate sources.

By October 1, 2019, the SPI must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that recommends whether to continue, modify, or expire the Summer Step-Up Grant Program, and describes:

- how many students were supported during the summer learning programs funded by the Summer Step-Up Grants;
- lessons learned in combining academics and SEL in summer learning programs; and
- lessons learned in funding meal programs during the summer using reimbursements from the USDA or other nonstate sources.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires that the DEL give priority to summer early childhood programs that plan to include 5-year-old children, as well as 4-year-old children.

In the substitute bill, a representative of a statewide ELO intermediary and experts in youth development and ELOs are added to the SEL benchmarks work group. The SEL Benchmarks Work Group is also: required to develop guidance that includes best practices for incorporating SEL into expanded learning and youth development programs; and must incorporate and align SEL with the Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development, in addition to the other listed state education initiatives.

The substitute bill directs that one purpose of the school survey is to understand the capacity of districts' community-based partners to implement the SEL benchmarks and indicators, rather than the capacity of the districts.

The substitute bill clarifies that the Summer Step-Up Grants are available to public schools, school districts, expanded learning organizations, and community-based organizations operating summer learning programs.

Finally, the term "summer meals" is replaced with the term "meal programs during the summer" throughout the substitute bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 16, 2017.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Academic decline during the summer, or summer slide, is a problem. This bill provides a variety of components to help kids move through the summer and be better prepared for school in the fall.

Some school districts are trying to close the achievement gap for their littlest learners, who are often behind academically before they even start school. With the right resources, every student can graduate college and be career ready. Some districts support students by offering ECEAP, but not all students can enroll in these programs because districts are out of space. Many districts do not have the resources to build more classrooms. The bill allows districts to target the highest need students by providing funding for districts to offer ECEAP in the summer. These districts could offer SEL programs to pre-kindergarten students in existing facilities and provide transportation and meals. It would be good to specify that the grant is for ECEAPs offering programs to four and 5 year olds. This bill is a great investment and will close the opportunity and achievement gap for students in some districts.

Social skills are important because they help students be successful academically. This bill will provide funding for summertime learning programs and help students with SEL education. Many students who are truant have trouble with their mental health and many of these kids do not have SEL skills. Teachers and parents have the resources to effectively teach their children. When SEL skills are taught, there are dramatic effects in students' behavior and academics, and in the school climate.

It is important to conduct SEL programs with well-fed students. Many children are living in poverty. Some programs are available to provide food to kids on the weekends. When kids are well fed, they are able to learn. It would be great to expand food programs into the summer months.

Some advocates of SEL think that many kids are failing to meet their potential to succeed in school and in life. Without strong social and emotional supports, students are at risk of truancy or dropping out of school, and not persisting in post-secondary education. There is also a risk of bullying, maladjustment, trauma, interpersonal violence, suicide, and substance abuse. Relationships matter. Students do not come into the classroom leaving their experiences at the door. Some parents think SEL is a high priority. Schools must be equipped, supported, and empowered to support SEL so that academic learning can take place. The components of the workgroup included in the bill are critical to ensuring that the work stays focused on supporting students and being responsive to the needs of schools and communities across the state.

Students with diverse backgrounds benefit from SEL, especially students from cultures that do not emphasize SEL. It is important for all students to be taught social and emotional skills so that they are prepared when difficult or traumatic events happen in their lives.

Some people think that SEL approaches make children and teens feel more supported, become confident in their learning abilities, and ultimately be academically successful. These are the skills that kids need in school and in life. Some students feel like they have been given up on so they give up on themselves. The approaches of SEL help kids feel that their needs are being met in specific areas in which they are struggling. Students should feel like their school is confident in them even if they are not confident in themselves.

Bullying happens in every school and at every grade level. Bullying affects students' ability to learn because it affects self-esteem. Those who are bullied suffer from high rates of school absence, depression, and anxiety.

It would be great to include ELOs in this bill to make sure that community partnerships happen. Some think that SEL should be viewed from two perspectives - what is the school's role and what is the community's role—because everyone shares in the obligation to support students.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The SEL should be kept in the analog realm of the teacher who is doing the teaching. The computer should be kept out of any decision related to SEL.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Michelle Whitney, Pasco School District; Rand Hodgson, North Thurston County School District; Gracie Anderson; Sarah Butcher, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Douglas Ortiz-Ramirez, Halee Harrison and Leah Bridges, Youth Ambassadors; and David Beard, School's Out Washington.

(Other) Don Bunger.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Steffany Brown, YWCA of Olympia; Nicole Henson, YMCA of Greater Seattle; Ron Hertel, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Seth Dawson, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Washington.